

# How About Some Good News?

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Date: 24 March 2019

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[0:00] All right, throughout the week, I try to make it a point to watch the evening news from time to time, the 5.30 broadcast of the world news.

And I've noticed a pattern. For the first 28 minutes or so, there's a lot of sobering news. People dying, natural disasters, political divisions, different levels of despair.

And about halfway through, the anchor starts pointing you to a little segment that's going to come to the end of the service, broadcast. And that little segment at the end of the broadcast is typically the feel-good close of the broadcast.

Do you know what the producers of the evening news have realized? That if their viewers are watching a broadcast full of despair and disaster, death and division, chances are that their viewership is going to walk away depressed and their radio isn't going to drop.

So they figured out, let's put some good news in. Two-minute good news at the end of every broadcast. A couple weeks ago, I was watching and learned that the late President Bush's service dog has been redeployed into children's hospitals to bring a smile to the face of children with leukemia, which is sweet.

[1:36] But I also watched that there are a thousand people had been killed in a cyclone. I'd also seen just minutes before that there were people with all sorts of money who were able to buy their children into prestigious colleges through some kind of backdoor means.

I also saw the deep political divisions in our country, and we've got a president with a serious lack of self-control. I saw it. Is a service dog going to help with that?

How about some real good news? The 5.30 broadcast of the news isn't going to tell you what you need to hear. Now, the book of Revelation isn't all smiles, is it?

It can be very dark in places. There can be death and devastation. Seven cycles of these judgments that keep falling.

Seals and trumpets and bowls. Devastating different amounts of the earth that will finally and fully result in God's wrath being poured out through the bowl judgments.

[2:56] It's in chapter 16 on all the earth. It can be dark. Devastating. But in the midst of the book of Revelation, you have these good news deposits.

It's real good news. It's pictures of Jesus in his might and glory. It sets our hopes on what is true.

And so, brothers and sisters, we're in the midst of a spiritual war zone over worship. There's a battle being fought for the hearts of men and women. Who will be worshipped?

It's either the beast or the lamb. In the world's version of good news, you know what? It just doesn't cut it. Because the book of Revelation echoes the rest of the scriptures as to what is the real problem of humanity.

It's internal, our indwelling sin that metastasizes in idolatry. We have this tendency of worshipping anything but God. And we learn from the book of Revelation that the spiritual forces of darkness seek to capitalize on that.

[4:14] By suppressing the truth of God. And garnering worshippers for the beast. We're in a spiritual war zone. And there's all sorts of false gospels flying around to call you to something other than the lamb.

But there's only one true gospel that comes down from heaven. That's God's message of salvation to a fallen world fixed on rebellion.

And that message is the message of a lamb who was slain but is now standing. Jesus. Jesus. The good news that you need to hear right now, every day, is the good news that Jesus has been slain

for you but is now alive.

And so this morning I come not declaring service dogs. I come pronouncing good news of the lamb who was slain.

And this comes at a good time because we're in the midst of a battle. In chapters 12 and 13 we learn that Jesus was crucified.

[5:35] He was slain. And because of that the dragon of old was thrown down to the earth. No access to the heavenly court. And he was thrown down.

And he's furious because he knows his time is short. It's the beginning of the end for him. And so he has deployed two of his spiritual henchmen. Beast 1 and Beast 2.

To wage war against us, God's saints. Beast 1 is the power of the state untethered from God to oppose God. And Beast 2 is the propagandist who is trying to use his subtle craft to tether people to the beast.

It's an effective strategy that has been going on for millennia. It just takes different forms. The anti-trinity is very adept at using what he's got to distract people away from the lamb.

And so in chapter 13 verse 4 we hear this question from the followers of the beast. Who is like the beast and who can fight against it? They don't think that there's an answer.

[6:51] Chapter 14 gives an answer. The lamb is greater than the beast. And the lamb has won the victory over the beast.

I'm so glad the book of Revelation doesn't end with chapter 13. There's more good news to be mined. And so here's how we're going to proceed this morning.

I want you to see that the gospel, the lamb who was slain, is God's power for you to endure. In the spiritual war zone we find ourselves in.

The gospel is God's power for his saints to endure. And so in chapter 14, in order to help you see this, we've got two pictures of good news.

Chapter 14, 1 through 5. Scene 1. A vision of the redeemed of God singing praises to the lamb. They're singing good news.

[7:52] And then the second scene in chapter 14, 6 through 11, scene 2, is a vision of three angels. And they are proclaiming good news. And when we get there and walk through it, you're going to be like, well, that doesn't sound like good news to me.

Oh, it's good news. I'll help you see why. And what we have in verses 12 and 13 of verse 14 is how we are to respond to all this good news as saints of God under siege.

We are to endure. The gospel is God's power for his people to endure. So let's look at how this plays out in scene 1, a vision of the redeemed.

Verses 1 through 5. Then I looked and behold, on Mount Zion stood the lamb. Here's what I want you to see in this little section. Notice what John sees.

Then I want you to notice what John hears. And then I want you to see how John describes the redeemed. So see what John sees.

[9:05] Instantly, immediately, you've got to realize he's no longer looking at the earth. He's no longer looking at the dragon on the seashore. He's no longer looking at the beast coming up.

He's no longer looking at the beast 2 coming up on earth. He is looking into heaven. It's a contrast. And what he beholds is Mount Zion. The heavenly Mount Zion.

And that's another way of talking about a city. The city of God. The new Jerusalem on Mount Zion. What John sees is the new Jerusalem.

The city of God. And I just want to let you know right now. The new Jerusalem, that's the bride of the lamb. But what you need to know up front here is Babylon.

That's the beast's barmaid. That's what you've got to understand about Babylon. You're going to see this contrast develop in just a little bit. What John sees in heaven, Mount Zion.

[10:11] And in the midst of Mount Zion stood the lamb. If you look back at 12:17, you see someone else standing.

The dragon. But here John is setting our gaze on the lamb. The lamb who was slain. The lamb who's standing in victory.

The lamb standing in victory in his place. The new Jerusalem. And notice those who are around him are 144,000. When I preached on Revelation 7, I made the case that that 144,000 is actually a description of all of God's people for all time.

It's a way of talking about the church as a full and complete number of the redeemed. And they are surrounding him. 144,000 is a symbolic number that captures the fullness of God's people.

Surrounding the lamb in heaven, Mount Zion. And what John then draws our attention to is he draws us into what's written on the foreheads of each of these 144,000.

[11:29] Two names. The name of the lamb and the name of the father. Is anybody aware that the new Toy Story is coming out? One of the previous Toy Stories, there's this scene where Sheriff Woody, his foot has been pulled up.

It's about to be painted over. And there's a name on the bottom of his foot. Remember what that name is? Andy. Andy. Why is the name Andy on Woody?

He belongs. He belongs to Andy. When you have the name of something, someone written on you, it means you belong to them in the book of Revelation.

And so if the name of the lamb is written on you, you belong to him. It's in contrast to the number of the beast.

Completely incomplete. 666. Written on the name of his followers. We belong to the lamb.

[12:39] If you've put your faith in Jesus, if you've decided to follow Jesus in light of what he has done for you, his name is written on you. You haven't written it on your own forehead.

He, in his grace, has claimed you as his own. So what we have going on here is this. We have a picture of God's people with his name on their foreheads in his place.

That's what's going on here. And we're given this picture in the midst of a spiritual street fight. And so what's going on here is that our God wants to remind us of who we belong to.

We have an address. It's not here. It's in Mount Zion. That's our homeland. You belong to the lamb. And you have a place waiting for you in the new Jerusalem. Notice what now John hears in 14, 2 through 3.

[13:45] It's remarkably loud. We read, And I heard a voice from heaven like the roar of many waters, the sound of loud thunder.

The voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps. That's all loud stuff. It's a racket. Roaring. Think of Niagara.

You can't have a conversation with somebody around Niagara Falls. Thunders. They get really loud. Harpists. We got a harpist in our church. Mary Jo. Mary Jo, where are you? There she is. When Mary Jo plays her harp, it's loud. Mary Jo, what happens if there is 100 harpists playing in this room? Do you know what would happen? Blow out the windows.

Loud. Loud. So what we're being shown here, what we're supposed to hear, it's really loud in Mount Zion.

[14:39] There is loud voices, sounds going on. And now we've got to ask, who's the source of it?

And if you look at 14.3, you see the source. And they were singing. All this sound. All this noise. It's coming from the 144,000. It's coming from those who are surrounding the Lamb. It's coming from those who have been redeemed. And notice, they're singing a new song.

What is this new song business about? I'm going to bring you through a little tour of the book of Psalms. We're going to work from the back to the front. So if you would open up your Bibles to Psalm 144, 9 and 10.

Let me see if you can pick up on the pattern. Psalm 144, 9 and 10. We read, I will sing a new song to you, O God. Upon a ten-stringed harp, I will play to you who gives victory to kings, who rescues David, his servant, from the cruel sword.

[15:46] Now flip to Psalm 98, verses 1 and 2. O sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things. His right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.

Now turn to Psalm 96, 1 and 2. O sing to the Lord a new song. Sing to the Lord all the earth. Sing to the Lord. Bless his name. Tell of his salvation from day to day. Picking up on a pattern?

Now look at Psalm 40, 2 and 3. Speaking of God, He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.

He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord. The new song business is this. When God demonstrates his power in a mighty act of deliverance for his people, they sing a new song.

They sing a new song of their deliverer. They sing a new song of his salvation. And these 144,000 are singing a new song of the greatest act of deliverance God has ever done through the Lamb who was slain.

[17:01] The song that they're singing is a redemption song. Don't think Bob Marley. Think the Lamb. His song. There's a new song that's been put on our lips.

Because we've been delivered from the miry bog. A new song. Being sung by his people in his place with his name on their foreheads.

Now I want you to see this. Note how in verses 4 and 5, these 144,000 are described. Here's how I want you to see it.

I want you to dial into the word these in verse 4. There's three of them. First one is this. These who have not defiled themselves with women for they are virgins.

Now you can take the 144,000 literally and so you have 144,000 virgin men. But I don't think that's what that's talking about.

[18:04] I think that this is symbolic of the church. And so if you're not a virgin male, don't feel excluded. This is talking about all of God's people who are spiritually pure to God.

Who are remaining chaste to him. Not going after other gods. It's talking about a purity of devotion. His people are purely devoted to the Lamb alone. Him alone. And the next thing, next these that we see is these follow the Lamb wherever he goes.

This 144,000, these are the redeemed. They're living their lives to him alone. And they're living their lives to him always. Following him wherever they go.

It's a picture of discipleship. We saw it in the followers of the beast as well. Obedience. And the last thing that we see is these have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb.

[19:11] And in their mouth no lie was found for they are blameless. So not only to live for him alone and for him always. He's our aim.

The first fruits language, that's harvest language. And we're going to see a harvest next week. The great harvest at the end of the age. When Jesus comes back with sickle in his hand.

And he harvests himself a people for himself. First fruits. It's not just the beginning of the harvest. It's that part of the harvest that is offered to God.

As worship. Sacrifice. Offering. So when you see the word blameless at the end of verse 5. Blameless.

Offering. No lie in our mouths. We are not bearing false testimony to a false savior. We're offering our praises to the real savior, the Lamb.

[20:16] His people gathered in his place with his name on their foreheads singing his song.

That's what we're seeing in this vision. And this is all taking place in the context of a spiritual war zone. It's all designed, Christian, for you to gather strength.

It reminds you of where is your final place. Who is your ultimate owner and master. It's designed to remind you of the kind of life you are to live.

You belong to the Lamb. This is all gospel news for you. This all comes to you as a result of God's mercy and his grace.

It's all true of you because the Lamb was slain. It's his song that you sing. When we work through Revelation 12 and 13, it's easy to get dragon phobic, beast phobic, false prophet phobic.

[21:36] You become more aware of your enemy than your real Lord and Savior. And what God is doing for us today is just aiming our hearts on the Lamb who was slain.

The gospel is God's power for us to endure. Let's quickly look at this second scene. It's a vision of three angels.

And this vision, starting in verse 6, begins with this first angel flying directly overhead, literally mid-heaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim, literally eternal gospel gospelizing to those who dwell on the earth.

So this first angel is going to be announcing gospel to those who dwell on the earth. And remember, that's a technical phrase in the book of Revelation for all those who have yet to follow Jesus, for all those who are following after the beast.

This gospel is being proclaimed by an angel to those who dwell on the earth. They need to hear it. But it's also going to be true for the second angel and the third angel.

[22:52] They're all going to be proclaiming good news to the dwellers of the earth. Look what this first angel says. He says to those dwelling on the earth, Fear God.

Give glory. Worship the Creator. Three commands to those dwelling on the earth. And maybe for your ears, you're kind of like, Well, that doesn't sound like that good news to me.

Well, you've got to realize what he's calling them from. Remember, dwellers on the earth, they're not in a neutral spiritual state. They're following the false prophet and the beast and the dragon.

And so this call to fear God is to stop fearing the beast. Fear the one true God. And to fear something means that that becomes the controlling center of your life.

It's more about reverence. The determinative motive of why you do what you do. Fear God. Give Him glory.

[24:05] Don't give glory to the beast. Who is like the beast? Don't do that. Give glory to God. Make much of Him.

And it culminates in worship. Worship the Creator. The one who made all. Heaven, earth, sea, and springs of water. We're going to see God pour out His wrath on those very things in just a couple weeks.

Don't worship the beast. Do you know what the good news is? There's a better God. God. Don't worship that.

There's a better God. The one true God. That's the good news. This angel is proclaiming to the dwellers of the earth. That's the good news. And there's a little other good news here.

This is taking place when judgment is coming. Did you see that? Give Him glory because the hour of His judgment has come.

[25:06] We're talking about the last hour. This is a last call. You know how in bars, bartenders will say, Last call. Because, you know, order your drinks now.

We're closing up. This is the last call by God. Before He pours out His full and final wrath through the bowls. Repent.

Good news. There's a better God. Angel 2, verse 8. Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, is what this angel says.

What he's saying is, don't bother with Babylon. Stop it. Remember, Babylon is the counter city to the New Jerusalem.

To Mount Zion. John is not speaking of the literal Babylon of Iraq at that time. What he's talking about is, he's using Babylon as a representative for all of humanity organized in opposition to God.

[26:10] That's Babylon. What 1 John 2 describes as the world. Organized humanity in rebellion against God. And what we'll see in chapter 17 and 18 of Babylon is her downfall.

Close up and personal. We're going to see Babylon fall. But what you need to know is that Babylon is the barmaid of the beast.

And she wants you to drink something. Do you see that in verse 8? She who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality.

Her sexual immorality is idolatry. She wants you to drink deep of anything that will cause you to worship in drunken, confused state.

Anything but the lamb. Babylon is all humanity, state, institutions, organizations, opposed to God.

[27:18] And she makes the nations drunk with idolatry. All throughout the scriptures, God talks about his people as being faithful to him as a bride.

And he talks about when his people turn against him, he calls them a whore. Because they're unfaithful to him. And here we have the prostitute of all, Babylon. Don't buy her stuff. Don't drink the wine she offers. We are citizens of the new Jerusalem. We've got an address on Mount Zion.

We've got the lamb's name on his forehead. So don't drink what Babylon pours out. If Babylon is the beast's barmaid, the new Jerusalem is the lamb's bride.

And in chapter 21, verse 2, do you know what happens? John sees the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven. Do you know what he says? Behold, the bride of the lamb. How is this good news?

[28:25] How is this good news? How is this good news for the dwellers of the earth? Because there's a better city. There's a better city.

The angel is, hey, this is last call, gang. Stop living for Babylon. Aim your hearts at the new Jerusalem. But did you notice there's no mention of Jesus by these angels?

What's up? Let's go to angel number three. The last angel. Declaring good news.

This might be a little hard to swallow. In verses 9 and 11, the second half, we read this. If anyone worships the beast in its mark and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, verse 10, then this will happen.

Notice the last part of verse 11. These worshipers of the beast in its image and whoever receives the mark of its name. You notice how verse 9 and the last part of 11 is virtually the same thing?

That's a special way of bookending a passage.

[29:36] What happens in the middle is really important. If you worship the beast, if you bear his mark, then this is going to happen to you.

And what we see is two pictures of God's wrath and fury poured out on those who reject the lamb. The first is a picture of God's wrath as wine.

He also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured out full strength into the cup of his anger. Those who drink of Babylon's wine, they're not done drinking.

They got one more round coming. The wine of God's wrath poured out on them. And it's a never-ending round of wrath.

God is patient. And what we learn from the scriptures is that he has been holding back his wrath for a day that is set.

[30:43] If you want to think about it this way, think about it like this. God has been storing up his wrath and these really fine barrels of Mount Zion wood that just soaking in the wrath.

And the day is coming where he will break into the barrel and pour out his wrath in one cup of anger after the other and force it upon those who have rejected the lamb.

Drink it down to the dregs. It is a violent, harsh picture of God's retributive justice.

And that's just the beginning. We move from wine of God's wrath to the torment. The fire of his fury in the second half of chapter of verse 10.

And he will be tormented. Those who worship the lamb, who don't turn from the lamb, he will be turned from the beast who worship the beast. If they don't turn, he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the lamb.

[31:55] And their smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever. And they have no rest, no rest, no rest. Day or night, these worshipers of the beast.

Sulfur is translated in other older versions of the Bible as brimstone. And so when you hear of fire and sulfur, your mind should be going to Genesis 19 in Sodom and Gomorrah, where God poured out fire and sulfur for their rebellion against him.

That word torment, we saw it in Revelation 9. It's as much mental as it is physical.

And what this is pointing at is a conscious suffering that God will inflict upon those who reject the lamb.

Worship the beast. This is going to all happen in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the lamb.

[33:08] Did you read that? Am I reading this right? The lamb is there. Do you know what this means? The lamb, who was the exactor of God's salvation and endured the wrath of God for those who would believe.

He is the exactor of God's wrath for all who don't believe in him. It's a picture of being people suffering.

Conscious suffering. And they're beholding the lamb. Smoke of their turmoil, of their torment, their suffering goes up forever and ever.

That smoking picture is what happens to cities that get conquered. It's the conqueror of Babylon and everyone who's a member of that city.

And then there's no rest. And they have no rest. No rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast. You know what that means? That there is this teaching of annihilation.

[34:26] That's kind of around the church. That God's punishment kind of goes so far and then people are annihilated. Not according to this. Their torment is forever.

Unrelenting. Ceaseless. No rest. And maybe you're like, how is that good news?

It's a call of repentance. Repent. Turn away from this eternity.

Because there's a better eternity. There's a better eternity. There's a better God. There's a better city. There's a better eternity.

And we're going to see it in just a minute. Where instead of restless torment, it's an eternity of rest. With the Lamb.

[35:27] This is good news. Because God in His kindness and His patience is going all the way to the end, calling the dwellers of the earth to repent and come to Him.

Now if you're a Christian in the room, here's what this should be doing for you. This should be doing two things in your heart. Get personal.

You were once under this wrath. And God, through the Lamb, delivered you from it. The Lamb who was slain bore this wrath for you.

He drunk God's wine to the dregs for you. He bore the torment of the fire for you.

It's good news for Christians. It's a sober reminder, but it's also sober in the sense of when you realize that the people living around you, the people that you interact with, they've got this eternity waiting for them.

[36:36] this should motivate you. Motivate you to move towards them and motivate you to open your mouth and speak of the Lamb who was slain, who offers better God, better city, better eternity.

Did you notice where Jesus is in these announcements? He's at the end. He's pictured as the executor of God's wrath.

This Lamb, who is going to exact God's just wrath, is the Lamb who bore God's wrath for anyone who would come to Him in repentance and faith.

It's good news. There's still time. But also, we've seen Jesus before and after.

Remember? 14.1, the Lamb standing in Mount Zion, the Savior of all. And then when you look at 14.14, we're going to look at this next week. We have another picture.

[37:52] Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud and seated under the cloud like a son of man with a golden crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. He's the judge. These announcements come in between a picture of Jesus, the Savior, the Lamb, and Jesus, the judge, coming on a throne, coming on a cloud with a sickle.

He offers us, all people on the earth, the worship of the one true God, an address in the greater city, and the promise of an eternity of rest.

Having looked at this, we've seen a vision of the redeemed singing gospel. We've seen a vision of angels proclaiming the gospel.

How do we respond? Well, we don't have to guess because it's right here in the text. Look at verse 12. In light of all of that, here is a call for the endurance of the saints.

Endurance means to hold fast and to press on. When I was a younger man, I worked for a guy who was my best friend's older brother. He was a bachelor. He had this construction business. We built decks during the day.

[39:11] And at night, we would literally go back to his house and we would battle each other. He would throw me over his furniture. I would push him against the walls. He would get me in these headlocks that were

intended to suffocate me and bring me to a point where I faint and I have to tap out.

But I wouldn't tap out because my pride was on the line. I held fast. I endured. Satan, chapters 12 and 13, is looking to get us into a spiritual headlock and he wants us to tap out, to compromise, to go the way of Babylon, to follow after the false prophet, to worship the beast, to give it up. But what we're being called here is to endure, to hold fast, to press on. Don't tap out. In light of who you are, you're in his place, you've got his name, his song, because you're his people. You yourself have been called to the better God, to the better city, to a better eternity. In light of all that, endure.

Hold fast. Press on. And John gives us two ways in which we endure. Keep the commandments of God. That means obey everything written in his word.

[40:41] Obey it all. It's all God's word. It's all yes and amen. It's all blessing for you. And it says, keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.

In the original language, it literally leads and the faith of Jesus. Keep the faith of Jesus. And what's being said there is what, back in Revelation 1, 9, John says.

Exiled on Patmos, he says, I'm here because of the word of God. I've been obeying the word and the testimony of Jesus because I've been proclaiming Jesus. And so we endure by being, by obeying.

We're citizens of Mount Zion living in Babylon. And so we will be distinguished by how we live. But we're also told to keep the faith.

We just don't obey. We obey and proclaim. We give the reason for the hope that is in us. The lamb who was slain. And when we endure, we have an assurance.

[41:55] Verse 13, I heard a voice from heaven saying, write this. That's God speaking. God's saying to John, write it down. John's writing it down. And what he's writing down is, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.

He's talking about those who will martyr for Jesus as well as those who die of natural causes. The point is this. Endure to the end of your life for Jesus.

Endure. Hold fast. Obey Him. Proclaim Him. All the days of your life. From here on out. And then we hear a second voice.

Blessed indeed, says the Spirit. Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors. The blessing is in the promise of rest.

Do you remember what happens in the third angel? He says to those who worship the beast, there will be no rest for them for eternity. They may have the peace of the beast now, but they will have no rest, just torment for eternity.

[43:16] Followers of Jesus, we experience the torment of the beast now for a little while because we know we've got the promise of an eternal rest with the Lamb. For their deeds follow them.

our works of endurance, our obedience in our proclamation, the evidence that we belong to the Lamb. And we are blessed by enduring.

I don't know about you, but this is way better than a service dog. Did you hear some good news this morning? not feel-good gospel, not a greed gospel, but the true gospel from heaven, the Lamb has been slain.

You have a place, His place. His name is written on your head. His song is in your mouth. You're part of His people. You have moved from worshipping the other God to the one true God.

He has brought you from the city of Babylon to the city of Mount Zion. He has brought you from eternity of torment to an eternity of rest.

[44:36] It's good news. The good news gives us power to endure. Let's pray. God in heaven, thank you so much for a reminder of the Lamb who was slain and the call to endure.

Lord Jesus, thank you for saving us and thank you for your promised presence to enable us to endure all the days of our life.

In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.